

WASHINGTON (29 October) – Late Wednesday evening, President Obama signed into law the Fiscal Year 2010 Department of Homeland Security Act, which included an initiative sponsored by U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.) to enhance our nation's visa screening capabilities overseas to keep terrorists out of the United States.

The Bilirakis provision increases funding for the Visa Security Program, which is an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) program that places security officers at high-risk overseas posts to carefully investigate and scrutinize visa applicants. Currently, Immigration and Customs Enforcement operates 14 visa security units around the world.

“The Visa Security Program is a vital terrorist detection tool which allows ICE to aggressively examine visa applications to identify potential terrorists before they gain entry to the United States,” said Bilirakis. “The increased funding will provide ICE with needed resources to establish an additional visa security unit and accelerate the addition of new units overseas in the coming years.”

The provision is budget neutral and transferred funds from administrative purposes under the Office of the Secretary of Homeland Security to ICE's Visa Security Program.